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ABSTRACT

This report evaluates the 1985-86 implementation year of the District of Columbia Public Schools Secondary Student Progress Plan (SSPP), which delineates courses of study for secondary students and establishes uniform procedures for grading and promotions. SSPP was implemented in Grade 7 in 1984-85 and Grade 8 in 1985-86. Evaluation data were collected during visits to implementation sites. The report is divided into an introduction and three chapters, which present the following: (1) development and description; (2) effects of implementation; (3) conclusion and recommendations. Three major needs are identified: (1) an immediate need to examine the automated scheduling process to determine if timelines can be more coordinated with the determination of student eligibility for promotion; (2) a need to establish a joint elementary-secondary task force to examine Grade 6 exit and Grade 7 entry level criteria for the purpose of developing a Grade 6-7, exit-entry level test; and (3) a need to establish an advisory group made up of secondary school administrators, counselors, teachers, parents and students to address concerns about grade level designations, additional tutorial and support service needs, and other issues. Two appendices present statistics on June 1986 promotion rates for Grade 7 and 8 students with Grade 7 rates compared to California Tests of Basic Skills (CTBS) grade equivalent scores by school, and percent of students with less than a 2.0 average as of June 1986 by school and grade. (KH)

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THE SECONDARY STUDENT PROGRESS PLAN
GRADES SEVEN AND EIGHT

SCHOOL YEAR 1986-86

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DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

THE SECONDARY STUDENT PROGRESS PLAN
GRADES SEVEN AND EIGHT
SCHOOL YEAR 1985-86

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January 1987

THE SECONDARY STUDENT PROGRESS PLAN
GRADES SEVEN AND EIGHT
SCHOOL YEAR 1985-86

Executive Summary

The Secondary Student Progress Plan (SSPP) delineates a course of study for secondary students and establishes uniform procedures for grading and promotions. The plan addresses provisions for students with differing entry levels including gifted and special education students, monitoring student progress and reporting progress to parents.

SSPP was implemented in grade seven in 1984-85 and grade eight in 1985-86. The schedule approved by the Board of Education calls for implementation in grades nine and ten in 1986-87 and eleven and twelve the following school year.

Data Collection

Staff from the Division of Quality Assurance made site visitations to schools implementing SSPP during the first semester. Visits included structured interviews with principals, counselors, teachers and students. Questionnaires were administered to parents of students in the program. Data relative to course enrollment, attendance, participation, and successes were furnished by the report card system.

Students and Schools in the Study

The October enrollment recorded 6,505 seventh and 5,959 eighth graders housed in eight elementary schools with an extended program, three middle schools and twenty-nine junior high schools. These students and schools were the targets for SSPP implementation.

Findings

The data discussed in the report suggest the following generalizations about SY 1985-86 SSPP implementation:

- Most of the essential features of SSPP were successfully implemented as outlined in the plan; and
- There was an overall program improvement as indicated by greater staff proficiency, reduced course failures in grade seven and a big increase in attendance for the summer session.

In addition to the positive general findings, there were specific concerns highlighted by the data. The first three concerns had an impact on implementation in grades seven and eight. It is anticipated that the fourth concern will have an impact on implementation for the coming school year.

1. Entry Level Concern. The feeling among the secondary people was that social promotion is being practiced in the elementary schools or elementary school teachers are not being accurate in documenting the instructional levels of sixth grade students. Many sixth graders are entering grade seven without adequate entry level skills. Not only is this a problem in September but also at the end of the first semester when teachers must deal with the low entry levels and the integration of the new student into a major course which has been on-going for half of the school year.

2. Scheduling Concern. The concern relative to scheduling was twofold. Data revealed that some seventh grade students who were unsuccessful, returned to school as eighth graders in opposition to the promotion policy. Schedules for these students included all eighth grade courses or a combination of seventh and eighth grade courses. One reason advanced for this senario had to do with the centralized automated scheduling process. To prepare schedules for the coming year, student data had to be submitted during the spring of the current year. There were provisions for updating, but principals said the updating was too time - consuming and often precluded the summer school results.

   The second concern dealing with scheduling involved school resources and staff attitudes. The switching of students at the opening of school and the continued movement during the year as students acquired mastery caused confusion, chaos and staff morale problems. Teachers had problems coping with students entering major courses after instruction had been underway for some time.

3. Promotion Policy Concern. There was concern that students in SSPP are required to be retained for being unsuccessful in only one major course. Teachers wanted to know the difference between a seventh grade student whose course load consists of seventh grade mathematics and the balance eighth grade courses and an eighth grade student whose course load consists of all eighth grade courses except for a seventh grade mathematics course. Many teachers felt that to call a

student a seventh grader because he/she has one seventh grade course defeats the purpose of a progress plan.

4. The 2.0 ("C") Average Concern. This concern is raised as a result of examining data collected on all secondary school students through the report card system. The rule requiring students in grades nine through twelve to have a 2.0 ("C") cumulative grade point average as a prerequisite for participation in co-curricular activities takes effect in September 1986 (grade twelve excluded). SSPP expands to grade nine and ten in September. SSPP addresses providing support for underachievers and retainees. However, the question becomes whether SSPP support services are adequate to enable students to attain and maintain a 2.0 average in light of huge deficits indicated by the June 1986 data. The data indicated that over fifty percent of the students in grade nine through twelve had less than a 2.0 average. Under the 2.0 rule they would not be entitled to co-curricular opportunities for recognition, personal success, and experiences that enhance intellectual, social, cultural and physical development.

Conclusions

School year 1985-86 saw SSPP expand into grade eight. Approximately 12,600 students were in the program with nearly one-half for the second year. Data describing implementation revealed fewer problems and anxieties than were experienced in 1984-85. Administrators, staff, students and parents had a better understanding of roles, policies and expectations.

Overall it is concluded that SSPP was successfully implemented in grades seven and eight and has been effective in bringing needed structure to the secondary program by delineating the course of study, establishing uniform procedures for grading and promotion and providing special provisions and services for students with varied skill levels. The student promotion rate was much higher than the previous year. Attendance in the summer program was greatly improved. Attitudes and opinions about SSPP were much more positive in 1985-86 than those exhibited and expressed the first year.

There were several concerns raised which form the basis for the recommendations presented in the report.

Recommendations

1. There is an immediate need to examine the automated scheduling process to determine if timelines can be more coordinated with the determination of student eligibility for promotion.

2. There is a need to establish a joint elementary-secondary task force to examine sixth grade exit and seventh grade entry level criteria for the purpose of developing a grade six-seven, exit-entry level test.

3. There is a need to establish an advisory group made up of secondary school administrators, counselors, teachers, parents and students to address the following concerns:

   - The grade level designation for students who are not successful in one of the major courses;
   - The quarterly and semester movement of students from seventh to eighth and eighth to ninth grade courses that are one year in duration; and
   - The additional tutorial and support services needed to insure that all students meet the 2.0 ("C") average requirement.

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INTRODUCTION

A. Background

The past several years have been inundated with reports on educational excellence and reform proposals including changes in curriculum, grading standards and graduation requirements. The District of Columbia Public Schools began a renewed push for excellence with the establishment of its Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) in the late seventies and in the eighties has established a record for which it is proud.

With the implementation of the Student Progress Plan (SPP) in the elementary grades, third grade scores on the California Tests of Basic Skills have risen from 3.3 in school year 1980-81 to 4.3 in school year 1985-86. During the same time span sixth grade scores went from 5.8 to 6.9.

In school year 1984-85 the Secondary Student Progress Plan (SSPP) was implemented in grade seven. Initial implementation was met with feelings of apprehension on the part of the secondary school personnel. The new policies, renewed emphasis on skills mastery, new grading guidelines, and monitoring of student progress all tended to raise anxieties.

Teacher assessment of incoming seventh graders were made mainly through the use of teacher-made subject area tests. Results indicated that approximately fifty percent of the students were below entry level in major subjects - English, mathematics, science and social studies. However, first advisory marks did not indicate such a severe deficit for the students. The majority of the teachers cited insufficient staff development and too much paperwork as the major problems during the first few months of SSPP. Toward the end of the year concerns centered around skills needed for promotion, end of course testing and scheduling for the coming year. A summer program was implemented during the month of July and August. Students who had been unsuccessful in one or more of the major courses were given the opportunity to try and obtain the additional skills needed for success. However, attendance was less than desirable.

This report covers the second year of SSPP implementation as it was continued in grade seven and expanded to grade eight. Specific efforts were made to determine the extent to which:

- o Promotion guidelines were carried out in the schools;
- o Attitudes and opinions toward SSPP changed;
- o Student achievement improved; and
- o The summer program was more successful.

B. Data Collection

Staff from the Division of Quality Assurance made site visitations to schools implementing SSPP during the first semester. School visits included structured interviews with principals, counselors, teachers and students. Questionnaires were administered to parents of students in SSPP.

Data relative to course enrollment, student course attendance and participation, and subject area successes were furnished each advisory by teachers through the automated report card system. Mark distributions by course, grade point averages and promotion statistics were computed by the Division of Information Resource Management. Seventh and eighth grade promotion statistics for school year 1985-86 were requested from surrounding school districts and other comparable city school systems for comparison.

C. Schools and Student Population

The official 1985-86 DCPS enrollment, pre-k through twelve, was 87,677 students of which 92% were Black; 4% White; 3% Hispanic; and 1% other. Students were enrolled in 184 schools and instructional programs.

The official count of seventh and eighth graders in the fall of 1985-86 was 6,505 and 5,959 students respectively. These students were enrolled in SSPP and housed in eight elementary schools with an extended program, three middle schools and twenty-nine junior high schools. See Appendix A. These forty schools were the primary source of data for this report.

D. Organization of the Report

This report is divided into five sections - the Introduction, Chapters I through III and the Appendix. Chapter I gives a chronicle of the development of SSPP and a description of the program according to the established policies and guidelines. Chapter II presents and discusses findings. Chapter III gives the conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER I: DEVELOPMENT AND DESCRIPTION

A. Development of the Secondary Student Progress Plan

The mission of the District of Columbia Public Schools is to promote excellence by providing a viable and comprehensive instructional program (pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade) leading to the attainment of knowledge, competencies and skills which upon completion will enable each student to function as a useful citizen. In carrying out its mission the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) was developed by the school system and implemented in school year 1978-79.

CBC is an individualized, progressive, sequential instructional program based on the use of specific behavioral objectives for which criterion levels of performance have been established. The implementation of CBC required the development of new strategies for delivering the instructional program. The delivery system developed by the school system and implemented school year 1980-81 was the Student Progress Plan (SPP).

SPP provided for a competency-promotion procedure through which students were encouraged to move along a graded one to six continuum at their individual rates. Promotion is on a semester basis, therefore, the continuum is divided into twelve levels of progress. To be promoted a student must obtain mastery of a specified set of reading and mathematics objectives defined for a semester of work.

Planning for the Secondary Student Progress Plan (SSPP) was initiated in school year 1982-83 with the appointment of a task force that included representatives of the Washington Teachers' Union, Council of School Officers, Congress of PTA's, DCPS Administrators and staff. The development of SSPP was completed in school year 1983-84. In May 1984, the Board of Education approved the grading and promotion policies associated with SSPP and a phase-in plan. The phase-in plan called for implementation in grade seven SY 1984-85, grade eight SY 1985-86, grades nine and ten SY 1986-87 and grades eleven and twelve in SY 1987-88.

B. Description of the Secondary Student Progress Plan

The Secondary Student Progress Plan is conceptually aligned with the elementary school plan (SPP). SSPP addresses the programs, requirements and procedures governing secondary

school instruction. Courses required from grades seven through twelve are specified for all students, including those in career center programs.

SSPP establishes a promotion policy for the progression of students from grade seven through graduation. The criteria for promotion are as follows:

- For promotion from Grade 7 to Grade 8, a student must successfully complete the four major subjects of English, mathematics, science and social studies;
- For promotion from Grade 8 to Grade 9, a student must successfully complete the four major subjects of English, mathematics, science and social studies;
- For promotion from Grade 9 to Grade 10, five (5) Carnegie Units, including units in English, D.C. History and Government, and health and physical education, are required;
- For promotion from Grade 10 to Grade 11, ten (10) Carnegie Units, including English, are required; and
- For promotion from Grade 11 to Grade 12, fifteen (15) Carnegie Units, including English, are required.

Successful completion of a course is dependent upon the teacher's determination that the student has mastered required objectives. Teachers assign conventional grades A, B, C, D and F for each of four school advisories. For year long courses, a final examination is mandatory and constitutes twenty percent of the final grade.

At the beginning of each course, the teacher provides students with a detailed description of the methods, procedures, formulas, required objectives and other criteria to be used in arriving at grades. The teacher is responsible for maintaining tangible, pertinent, detailed and dated records to substantiate the grade given. Should a student appeal a failing grade, the teacher must provide the above documentation or raise the contested grade in accordance with involved factors.

SSPP includes provisions for dealing with the different student entry levels. These provisions require that all students be made aware of the course requirements during an orientation to the course, and that they be individually assessed to determine skill entry levels. Based upon students' strengths and weaknesses, strategies which are responsive to

individual needs and aspirations are employed such as incentives, acceleration, remediation, volunteer tutors, before and after school assistance, and using computers.

A building level committee reviews the program for all under-achieving and retained students and develops strategies for meeting those students' needs. The committee co-ordinates the services of transition classes, basic skills classes and Chapter I classes to avoid duplication of effort for any one student. Additionally, schools schedule these classes at the same time to allow flexible movement of students between groups in order to facilitate individual rates of students progress. Remediation classes are limited to a 15:1 student-teacher ratio. The team approach and computer-assisted remediation facilities are also employed.

Early diagnosis of underachieving student needs and intervention take place before the end of the first advisory. Individual profiles recording objectives mastered are maintained for the student, and all his/her teachers meet periodically as a team to plan the best strategies for progress. Additionally, homeroom teachers and counselors personally review each student's schedule to ensure that the course of study will result in promotion and graduation. Tutoring is available during, before and after school. All teachers are organized by grade level as well as by departments to increase the flexibility of instruction and allow for group planning for individual students.

The provisions for students in need of Special Education services are governed by the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP). Any students who desire to earn a diploma must participate in SSPP and meet the requirements for regular students.

Gifted or talented students are encouraged and enabled to progress through their course work at an accelerated rate using the continuous progress aspect of CBC. This allows a student who can demonstrate mastery of a course to do so and enroll in a more advanced course. These students may take advanced placement courses in high school or enroll in early admission college summer programs. Independent study, subject to approval, is acceptable for course credit, and may include summer study and travel. Elementary schools notify junior high schools, which in turn notify high schools, of individual students to be considered for accelerated or gifted programs.

Monitoring of student progress is essential to the successful implementation of SSPP. During the first two weeks of the school year, student schedules are reviewed and folders are prepared with samples of each student's work. A system for recording students' progress, procedures for sending work home for parental review, and a schedule for counseling sessions are developed. At the end of the first five weeks, the records of all students whose grades averaged D, F or I are reviewed, and notices of the deficiency are forwarded to parents. In addition, the need for additional assessment or Special Education/Pupil Personnel services are determined. The teacher and/or school makes the needed adjustments in the student's instructional program and conducts necessary conferences with the student and his/her parents. At the end of each advisory, the teacher of any student with a grade of D, F or I seeks to develop or update a collaborative remediation plan, obtains needed resources, discusses the remediation plan with the student, parents, counselor and other support staff, and provides varied opportunities for the student to acquire the specified skills. At the end of the school year, the teacher and school make recommendations and execute a referral for the student to participate in the extended summer program.

Parents are notified of a student's potential failure no later than mid-advisory. The report card has required comments and attendance recorded by each teacher, student address, grade point average for each advisory, final examination grades and parent's name. In addition, parents are provided with course outlines in the first two weeks of school, required objectives for the course, a form noting homework assignments to be initialed by parents, a copy of school and/or class rules, grading scale and regulations concerning class attendance, and a letter for parents to sign to indicate that they have received the information and understand their role in helping their child perform successfully.

The organization of a parent support group, consisting of parents of under-achieving students, is encouraged. These parents may receive training in understanding child development, using appropriate instructional strategies, assisting in homework, or visiting businesses for work experiences.

If a student fails to master the required objectives for the course, the teacher notifies the parents of the specific objectives which the student needs and recommends attendance at summer school.

Summer school, as an extension of the regular school year, provides an opportunity for students who have not mastered the required objectives. They receive credit for the course upon demonstrating mastery of the specified objectives. Summer school programs cover the basic areas of reading, English, mathematics, science and social studies for junior high school students, and all the required courses for high school students. Opportunities for enrichment experiences are also available during the summer, and students may enroll with the recommendation of their school principal.

Monitoring data collected and analysed over a two-year period indicated that the majority of the schools have implemented SSPP in grades seven and eight according to the guidelines and procedures described. However, this report deals mainly with the effects of implementation.

CHAPTER II: EFFECTS OF IMPLEMENTATION

A. Summer Program 1985

Anticipating that newly implemented SSPP promotion criteria might cause problems for students, provisions were made for a six-week summer session. Students in SSPP were given an opportunity to extend their school year and acquire additional skills. Depending on the number of skills needed it was possible for students to acquire those necessary for successful course completion.

1. Findings

- Slightly more than one third of the eligible seventh grade students attended summer school.
- Approximately three-fourths of those who attended summer school acquired additional skills for successful course completion.

2. Discussion

Data from the summer program revealed that 38% of the 1,795 seventh graders ineligible for promotion to grade eight in June took advantage of the summer session. Interviews with administrators, counselors, teachers and students in the Fall of school year 1985-86 provided feedback regarding low summer school attendance.

School staff felt one of the main reasons for low attendance was due to the fact that great emphasis was placed on summer employment by the city and the school system while too little was placed on the summer program. Students tended to agree with the staff. Many students said they had to work during the summer. A large number expressed a lack of understanding about or awareness of their need to attend summer school. Even though there were efforts to allow students to hold a summer job while attending summer school, many students stated they were either unaware of those efforts or were unable to do both.

End of summer school data revealed that 76% of the seventh graders in attendance acquired additional skills needed for successful course completion. Administrators and staff felt that success rates could have been higher. In

many cases student records indicating objectives needed for success were not made available to summer school teachers. This resulted in mastered objectives being retaught at the expense of those needed for successful course completion. School staff stated that students who were unsuccessful in several courses were allowed to attend summer school. They felt summer school was more appropriate for students who failed one course.

B. First Semester School Year 1985-86

One major aspect of SSPP is the promotion policy. The policy establishes criteria for promotion of secondary school students from one grade to the next higher grade. Promotions from seventh grade to eighth and from eighth to ninth grade require that students successfully complete English, mathematics, science and social studies at the current grade level. As stated previously, 1,795 seventh graders were unsuccessful the first year of SSPP in at least one of the four major courses. Given this number and the summer program success rate it was expected that slightly more than 1,000 seventh graders would return to school in the Fall as repeaters. Repeaters meaning students who had not met the criteria for being promoted to grade eight.

In order to determine the degree to which the promotion policy was followed, school visits were made to check records and interview staff and returning SSPP students. The school sites selected for visitation were ten junior high schools with the highest number of recorded unsuccessful seventh graders. Interviews were held with the principal, seventh grade counselors, one seventh and one eighth grade teacher selected at random, and five randomly selected students who should have returned to school as a seventh grader. Questionnaires were sent to the parents of students in the program. End of the semester student achievement indicators were examined and analyzed.

1. Findings

- Fewer repeaters than expected were found in each school.
- School personnel felt that changes were needed in some aspects of SSPP.
- The majority of the repeaters and parents supported the promotion policy.
- Seventh grade course failure rates were slightly lower than the previous year.

2. Discussion

Placement of Returning SSPP Students. Carrying out the promotion policy to the letter was next to impossible in many schools. One major problem was a result of the automated scheduling process that is maintained in Central administration for all secondary schools. In preparing for the opening of school in the Fall of 1985-86, data required for scheduling were submitted for each student in the spring of the previous school year. Even though provisions were made for updating, principals stated that the procedure was too time-consuming and timelines often precluded summer school results. Once the schedules were printed changes had to be made manually at the school level. In the words of one principal "it can be boondoggling."

Another problem was school resources for and staff attitudes toward handling repeaters. As a result, some schools followed the guidelines, others had the repeaters designated as seventh graders and repeating all seventh grade courses, while others had repeaters designated as eighth graders enrolled in all eighth grade courses. For the latter, the needed seventh grade skills were taught during extra periods of the day, at lunch hour or after school.

Attitudes Toward SSPP. The majority of the principals and staff interviewed felt that SSPP was not working well in regard to student promotion and scheduling. They suggested that the guidelines be looked at more closely. Too much confusion and chaos was caused at the opening of school and continued throughout the year with the constant movement of students from one grade to another. This included the enrollment of seventh graders promoted from grade six at midyear. The feeling among the secondary people was that the sixth to seventh grade problem was compounded by the fact social promotion occurred. Elementary school teachers failed to accurately document the reading and mathematics instructional levels of their sixth graders. Schedule adjustments had to be made continuously as success was acquired for promotion. Teachers had to cope with students from the lower grades entering year-long major courses at the end of the advisory or semester. Principals stated that major morale problems resulted. Many teachers said that in their opinion, to call a student taking one seventh grade mathematics course, and six eighth grade courses, a seventh grader defeats the purpose of the progress plan.

Counselors and parents generally, felt that SSPP and the promotion policy has had a positive rather than a negative effect on students. Principals and teachers felt that changes in students' behavior as a result of SSPP has been both positive and negative. The majority of the students interviewed were positive in their responses about SSPP and the promotion policy. A few said they were frustrated, very low or angry with themselves for not being promoted.

Course Failure Rates. A comparison of second advisory marks received over a three-year period indicates students received help to reduce course failure rates. The 1985-86 seventh grade failure rates for the four major courses averaged 15.9%, a slight decrease over the first year of SSPP and even more of a decrease over SY 1983-84 the year prior to implementation of SSPP.

Table 1

Second Advisory Course failures
of Seventh Graders Over A Three-Year Period

Courses	1983-84		1984-85		1985-86	
	No. Students	% Failure	No. Students	% Failure	No. Students	% Failure
English	5,595	18.1%	4,815	18.4%	4,604	17.4%
Mathematics	5,385	18.4%	4,537	17.6%	4,869	15.8%
Science	5,204	16.5%	4,797	14.8%	4,883	14.9%
Geography	5,048	15.4%	4,524	14.7%	4,847	15.7%
Average Per Course		17.1%		16.4%		15.9

The failure rate for eighth graders, most of whom were in their second year of SSPP, averaged 14%.

Teacher comments for the second advisory indicated that many students needed to study more, a small percentage had excessive absences and a small percentage had poor behavior.

C. Annual Results for SY 1985-86

Data were collected throughout the year on all secondary students. Where pertinent, base data for grades other than seven and eight are presented since SSPP will be implemented in grades nine and ten next year and in grades eleven and twelve in SY 1987-88.

1. Findings

- The seventh grade promotion rate was up 18% over SY 1984-85.
- The promotion rate for eighth grade students exceeded that of the seventh grade.
- Spring CTBS scores did not correlate with high promotion rates in all schools.
- Over fifty percent of the students in many schools, grades nine through twelve, had less than a 2.0 ("C") average.

2. Discussion

Promotion Rates. SSPP establishes specific and systemwide promotion criteria for grades seven through twelve. Prior to SSPP the determination to promote a seventh or eighth grader who failed one, two or three major courses was left to the discretion of individual schools. A student failing English and mathematics in one school might be required to repeat grade seven while in another school be promoted to grade eight. Under SSPP a seventh or eighth grade student not successful in one of the major courses cannot be promoted to the next higher grade. Based on this criteria and course failure data, student promotions under SSPP were computed as shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Year End Promotions and Retentions Under SSPP

Grade/ Year	Students Reported	Students Promoted		Students Retained	
		No.	%	No.	%
Grade Seven					
1984-85	6,188	4,393	71.0%	1,795	29.0%
1985-86	6,639	5,935	89.4%	704	10.6%
Grade Eight					
1985-86	5,965	5,570	93.4%	395	6.6%

The seventh grade promotion rate the first year of SSPP (1984-85) was 71.0%. The promotion rate for 1985-86 showed an increase to 89.4%. The promotion rate for eighth grade students, the majority of whom were completing their second year of SSPP, was 93.4%. Certainly some of the increase in promotion rates can be attributed to the fact that the second year of implementation resulted in more SSPP awareness and understanding on the part of administrators, staff, students and parents.

For comparison purposes, promotion data were sought from seventeen large city school districts. Usable data were received from only three of the districts. Data were requested and received from five surrounding school districts. See Table 3.

Table 3

DCPS Seventh and Eighth Grade Promotion Rates
Compared With Other School Districts SY 1985-86

School District	Promotion Rates Grade Seven	Grade Eight
DCPS (92%)*	89.4%	93.4%
Alexandria	80.9%	79.3%
Arlington	97.5%	94.3%
Fairfax County	95.9%	95.4%
Montgomery County	94.9%	96.0%
Prince Georges County	96.2%	96.7%
Cleveland (70%)*	83.0%	83.0%
Denver (22%)*	94.7%	96.2%
Detroit (88%)*	92.3%	96.3%

* Source: Council of the Great City Schools

Comparison of promotion rates with other school districts is not a true indicator of how students are progressing in SSPP, however, it should not be dismissed. DCPS rates were comparable to those received from the eight school districts shown in Table 3. Differences in rates are likely attributed to the varied promotion policies and assessment practices in the various jurisdictions. Many of the cities did not respond to the request for promotion data. Some did not present data in a comparable manner and others indicated they did not compute such statistics.

Promotion Rates and CTBS Outcomes by School. Seventh and eighth grade promotion rates are shown by school in Appendix A. Promotion rates ranged from a low of 71% (grade seven) and 80% (grade eight) to a high of 100%. Students in grade seven were

administered the California Tests of Basic Skills in the Spring. The results of the tests as to whether students scored below, at or above the national norms are compared with promotion rates. At least thirteen schools had seventh grade promotion rates of over eighty percent while their seventh grade CTBS scores were below national norms in reading, mathematics, language and total battery. While this is not a true correlation test, it does reveal some inconsistencies in outcome data for the same group of students.

2.0. ("C") Average Affect. A new requirement goes into effect in September 1986 that was not addressed in SSPP, but must be considered because of its impact on the instructional program and students. The new policy passed by the Board of Education requires students in grades nine through twelve to have a 2.0 ("C") cumulative grade point average, with no failing grades, as a prerequisite to participate in co-curricular activities. Students entering the twelfth grade in September 1986 are exempt from the requirement. With SSPP to be implemented in grades nine and ten in September, it was important to examine data that gave an indication of the impact of the new policy.

Appendix B shows the percent of students, by school and grade, who had less than a 2.0 ("C") average as of June 1986. At least fifty percent of the ninth graders in sixteen of twenty-five junior high schools ended school year 1985-86 with less than a 2.0 average. This was also true for ninth graders in five of eight senior high schools. These ninth graders will be entering grade ten and SSPP in September. The statistics for the other senior high grades were just as dismal. It is possible that half of the senior high school population, twelfth grade excluded, will be excluded from participation in activities which include interscholastic athletic teams or clubs, intramural sports, band and orchestra, choir and choral groups, career-oriented clubs, language clubs, theater groups, pep clubs, school publications, service/volunteer groups, honorary societies, debating teams, cheerleaders and science clubs. Since these kinds of activities give students a sense of belonging and personal success, the question might be whether participation denial will be additional time used for study or incentive to increase the dropout rate. Another question is whether the SSPP support services will be adequate for helping students attain a 2.0 average.

D. Summer Program 1986

As was the case after the first year of implementation, a summer program was provided to give SSPP students an opportunity to acquire needed skills. With the addition of grade eight to SSPP and greater emphasis on the results of the promotion policy, a greater number of SSPP students were expected to take advantage of the summer program.

1. Findings

- Summer school attendance by seventh graders was greater in 1986 than in 1985.
- The number of seventh and eighth graders attending the summer session was greater than the number of retentions.

2. Discussion

As previously stated, slightly more than one third of the seventh graders who failed a major course attended the 1985 summer program. The 1986 records revealed that 704 seventh graders failed one of the major courses and 1,119 seventh graders attended the summer session. Obviously, many students attended for reasons other than a major course failure. Data compiled did not show how many students attended because of a course failure. Data also show that more eighth graders (640) attended the summer session than were reported to have failed (395) one of the major courses.

Table 4 shows the results of the 1986 summer session.

Table 4

Summer School 1986 Results

Grade	Students Reported	Received Passing Grades	
		No.	%
7	1,119	790	70.6%
8	640	450	70.3%

The success rate of seventh and eighth graders was over seventy percent based on the number of students who received a passing grade in summer school.

CHAPTER III: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Conclusions

School year 1985-86 saw SSPP expand into grade eight. Approximately 12,600 students were in the program with nearly one-half for the second year. Data describing implementation revealed fewer problems and anxieties than were experienced in 1984-85. Administrators, staff, students and parents had a better understanding of roles, policies and expectations.

Overall, it is concluded that SSPP was successfully implemented in grades seven and eight and has been effective in bringing needed structure to the secondary program by delineating the course study, establishing uniform procedures for grading and promotion and providing special provisions and services for students with varied skill levels. The student promotion rate was much higher than the previous year. Attendance in the summer program was greatly improved. The attitudes and opinions about SSPP were much more positive than those exhibited and expressed the first year.

Several concerns and problems still need to be worked out. One concern carried over into year two relates to incoming seventh graders who are diagnosed as being below entry level. Many of the secondary school people believe social promotion is still practiced at the elementary school level. Another concern centers on the SSPP promotion policy and can best be explained by one teacher's questions. "Why should a student with one seventh grade Mathematics course and six eighth grade courses be classified as a seventh grader?" "Does it not go against the very grain of the award, motivation, continuous progress theory?"

There was evidence that scheduling problems were created when it was not known until late in the year or after summer school whether borderline students were eligible to move to the next grade level. The results were that some students were carried as eighth graders even though they had not been successful in all major courses. Another scheduling problem as well as an instructional management problem was created at the end of advisories and semesters when students acquired skills to complete a major course and became eligible to move to the next level course.

A concern raised by this study based on data collected in conjunction with SSPP deals with the grade point averages. Along with SSPP to be implemented in grades nine and ten in September 1986 is the 2.0 ("C") average policy which restricts

student participation in co-curricular activities. As of June 1986 an average of over fifty percent of the ninth through twelfth graders in thirty-three schools had grade point averages of less than 2.0. Assuming this percentage carries over to September 1986, many students will be denied participation in co-curricular activities and thus opportunities for recognition, personal success, and development of talents to round out their academic education.

B. Recommendations

1. There is an immediate need to examine the automated scheduling process to determine if timelines can be more coordinated with the determination of student eligibility for promotion.

2. There is a need to establish a joint elementary-secondary task force to examine sixth grade exit and seventh grade entry level criteria for the purpose of developing a grade six-seven, exit-entry level test.

3. There is a need to establish an advisory group made up of secondary school administrators, counselors, teachers, parents and students to address the following concerns:

   - The grade level designation for students who are not successful in one of the major courses;
   - The advisory and semester movement of students from seventh to eighth and eighth to ninth grade courses that are one year in duration; and
   - The additional tutorial and support services needed to insure that all students meet the 2.0 ("C") average requirement.

APPENDIX A

APPENDIX A

June 1986 Promotion Rates for Seventh and Eighth Grade Students With Seventh Grade Rates Compared to CTBS Grade Equivalent Scores by School

School	Seventh Grade Promotion Rate1/	Seventh Grade CTBS Scores At, Above, or Below National Norm: Reading	Mathematics	Language	Total Battery	Eighth Grade Promotion Rate1/
Brent ES	96%	At	Above	Above	Above	N/A
Brookland ES	88%	Above	Above	Above	Above	96%
Ft. Lincoln ES	87%	Above	Above	---	---	96%
Merritt ES	81%	Above	Above	Above	Above	100%
River Terrace ES	100%	Above	Above	Below	Above	N/A
Takoma ES	100%	Above	Above	Above	Above	95%
West ES	96%	Above	Above	Above	Above	98%
Winston ES	89%	At	Above	Below	Below	96%
Hardy MS	97%	Above	Above	Above	Above	100%
Hobson MS	93%	Above	Above	Above	Above	98%
Moten MS	92%	Below	Below	Below	Below	N/A
Backus JHS	89%	At	Above	Above	Above	95%
Browne JHS	---	Below	Above	Above	Below	---
Deal JHS	94%	Above	Above	Above	Above	96%
Douglass JHS	74%	Below	Below	Below	Below	90%
Eliot JHS	90%	Below	Below	Below	Below	96%
Evans JHS	87%	Below	Below	Below	Below	89%
Fletcher-Johnson JHS	81%	Below	Below	Below	Below	92%
Francis JHS	89%	Below	Above	Below	Below	92%
Friendship JHS	83%	Below	Below	Below	Below	89%
Garnet-Patterson JHS	83%	Below	Below	Below	Below	82%
Hamilton JHS	71%	Below	Below	---	---	93%
Hart JHS	---	Below	Below	Below	Below	---

1/ The percent of students who successfully completed the four major subjects of English, mathematics, science and social studies.

--- Data were not available.

APPENDIX A (Continued)

School	Seventh Grade Promotion Rate1/	Seventh Grade CTBS Scores At, Above, or Below National Norm: Reading	Mathematics	Language	Total Battery	Eighth Grade Promotion Rate1/
Hine JHS	91%	Below	Above	Below	Below	92%
Jefferson JHS	96%	Below	Above	---	---	98%
Johnson JHS	90%	Below	Below	Below	Below	88%
Kramer JHS	88%	Below	Below	Below	Below	90%
Langley JHS	81%	Below	Below	Below	Below	89%
Lincoln JHS	84%	Below	Below	Below	Below	84%
Macfarland JHS	77%	Below	Above	Below	Below	83%
Miller JHS	---	Above	Above	Above	Above	---
Paul JHS	95%	Below	Above	At	At	95%
Rabaut JHS	---	At	Above	Above	Above	---
Roper JHS	85%	Below	Below	Below	Below	95%
Shaw JHS	93%	Below	Above	Below	Below	97%
Sousa JHS	76%	Below	Above	At	Below	92%
Stuart JHS	86%	Below	Below	Below	Below	80%
Taft JHS	94%	Below	Below	Below	Below	96%
Terrell JHS	73%	Below	Below	Below	Below	89%
Woodson JHS	78%	Below	Below	Below	Below	87%
All Schools	89%	---	---	---	---	93%

1/ The percent of students who successfully completed the four major subjects of English, mathematics, science and social studies.

--- Data were not available.

APPENDIX B

Percent Of Students With Less Than A
2.0 ("C") Average As Of June 1986
By School and Grade

Junior High Schools	Grade Nine	Junior High Schools	Grade Nine
1. Backus	50%	14. Langley	69%
2. Deal	26%	15. Lincoln	42%
3. Douglass	76%	16. MacFarland	71%
4. Eliot	52%	17. Paul	48%
5. Evans	79%	18. Rabaut	27%
6. Fletcher-Johnson	48%	19. Roper	56%
7. Francis	44%	20. Shaw	41%
8. Friendship	71%	21. Sousa	58%
9. Garnet-Patterson	62%	22. Stuart	67%
10. Hamilton	72%	23. Taft	54%
11. Hine	39%	24. Terrell	65%
12. Jefferson	27%	25. Woodson	79%
13. Johnson	56%		

Senior High Schools	Grade Nine	Grade Ten	Grade Eleven	Grade Twelve	All Grades
1. Anacostia	73%	75%	73%	66%	72%
2. Banneker	38%	9%	11%	10%	25%
3. Dunbar	43%	60%	58%	51%	57%
4. Eastern	70%	58%	59%	58%	59%
5. Ellington	55%	40%	32%	25%	41%
6. McKinley	60%	60%	60%	56%	59%
7. School W.W.	34%	29%	27%	17%	26%
8. Wilson	52%	55%	57%	37%	51%
Thirty-Three Schools	52%	57%	58%	49%	54%

Note: Data were not available for nine schools on the Micro-Based System: Browne JHS, Hart JHS, Miller JHS, Ballou SHS, Cardozo SHS, Coolidge SHS, Roosevelt SHS, Spingarn SHS, and Woodson SHS. Kramer JHS did not have a ninth grade.